

IRAN'S POLICIES DURING WORLD WAR II

The British advanced from two points. One of their columns entered Iran from Khanaqin and proceeded through Kermanshah and Hamadan up to Qazvin. Another invaded the southwestern province of Khuzistan, also from Iraqi territory. British naval action was centered at Bandar Shahpur, which soon fell in their hands, together with eight German and Italian merchant vessels. The Royal Air Force bombed a few military objectives at Ahwaz but otherwise showed restraint.

Iranian opposition to this invasion was negligible. Despite the Iranian Staff's communiques, which boasted of the excellent morale of the army, the reverse was true. Iranian military resistance crumbled. Many officers deserted their units; many units abandoned their arms and melted away. The Pataq Pass lying across the British line of advance from the west was left open, although it might have been a formidable obstacle if defended. Except for an engagement in Khuzistan, where the Iranians under General Shahbakhti managed to inflict fifty-five casualties on the British, the Iranian army surrendered easily and made it possible for the Allies to take quick possession of most of the strategic points. A general breakdown of morale among the Iranian troops was evident. Their lack of courage was perhaps best symbolized by the fact that when the surrender decision was taken at Pahlavi, no Iranian of consequence ventured to approach the Soviet navy to announce it. Eventually a Belgian harbor employee volunteered to act as intermediary.

The military occupation of the country was completed within a few days. Simultaneously important political developments were taking place in Teheran. On August 27 the cabinet of

Ali Mansur resigned. It was clear that the complexion of the government would have to change to meet the new situation. On the same day the Shah appointed Mohammed Ali Furuqi to head a new^r government. Furuqi acted quickly: his new cabinet was presented to the Majlis on the following day and it obtained a vote of confidence. Except for two shifts in portfolios the cabinet members remained unchanged. On the same day, August 28, the new Premier announced that orders were given to the army to cease resistance.¹ This was a gesture of purely political character inasmuch as the army had ceased to be a

ⁱ *Journal de Tehran*, Aug. 29, 1941.